

# WINDOW WELLS FOR EMERGENCY ESCAPE AND RESCUE OPENINGS

The IRC requires a window well when the sill of the emergency escape and rescue opening is below the adjacent ground elevation. Window wells with a depth greater than 44 inches require a permanent ladder or steps to provide access to grade. The IRC prescribes minimum clearances when an emergency escape and rescue window is installed below a deck or porch.

## Window well dimensions (Figures 6 to 8):

Minimum horizontal dimension 36 inches  
Minimum horizontal area 9 square feet

Note: the size of the window well must also be sufficient for the full opening of the emergency escape and rescue window.

## Ladder or steps (Figures 6 to 8)

- Required for window wells deeper than 44 inches
- May encroach a maximum of 6 inches into the required window well area
- Must be usable with the window in the full open position
- Must be permanently secured in place

## Ladder rung dimensions:

Minimum projection from wall 3 inches  
Minimum width 12 inches  
Maximum vertical spacing 18 inches on center

Note: The stair and railing requirements for dwellings do not apply to window well steps. The IRC does not prescribe minimum width or depth of treads or a maximum riser height for these steps. They must simply provide a means for climbing from the window well to grade.

## Guards not required

The IRC does not require guards or barriers to protect against falls into window wells.

## Clearance under decks and porches (Figures 7 and 8)

An emergency escape and rescue window may be installed under a deck or porch when:

- The deck structure does not interfere with operation of the window and
- A clear path with a minimum height of 36 inches is provided to a yard or court

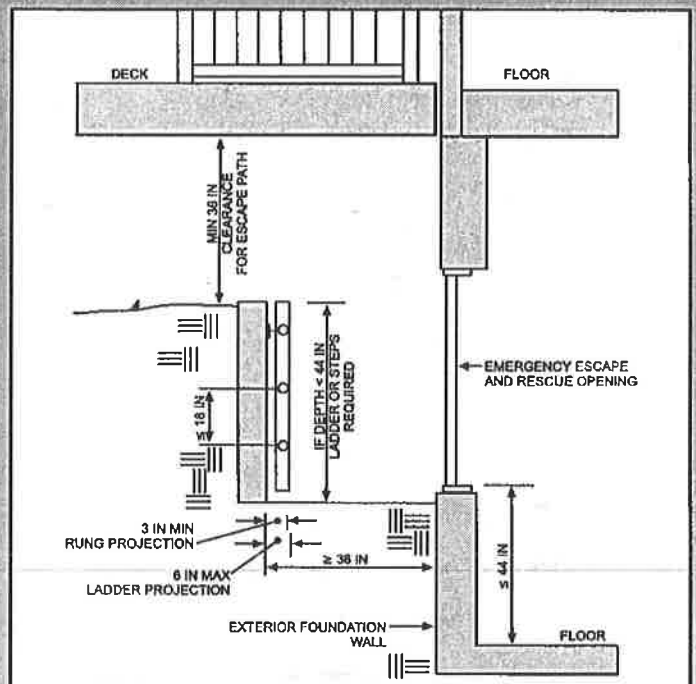


Figure 7 Window well and ladder below deck

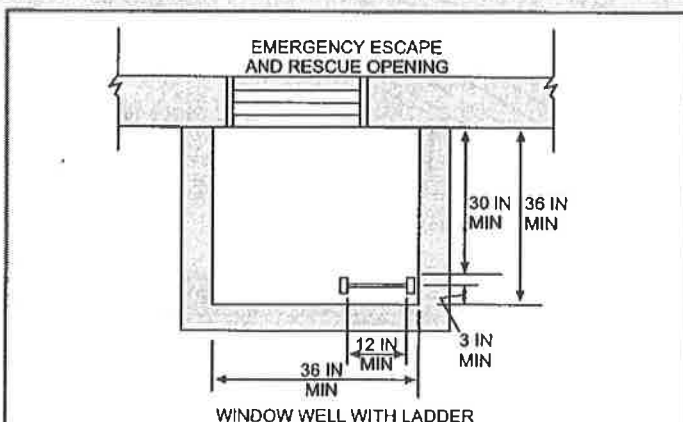


Figure 6 Window well dimensions

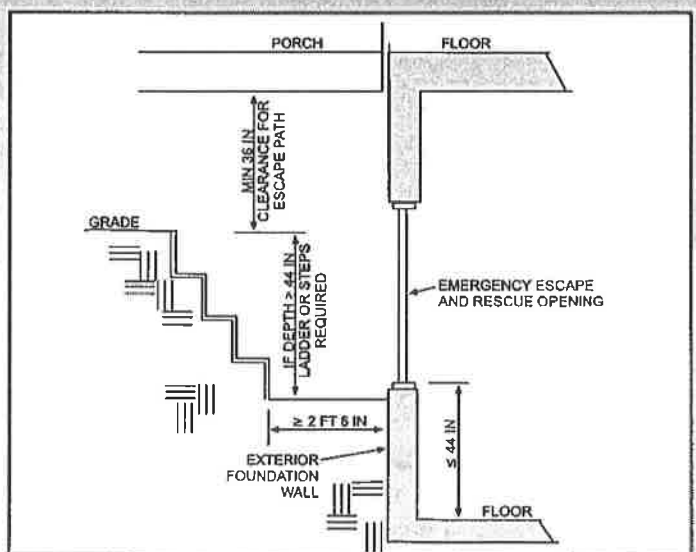


Figure 8 Window well and steps below porch